

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Flake, Elaine McCollins
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake,
Dates:	April 27, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	4 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:57:58).
Abstract:	Pastor Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake (1948 -) was a pastor at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral in New York City, a co-founder of the Allen Christian School and the author of God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Hurting Women. Flake was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 27, 2010, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_006
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A co-pastor at one of the largest churches in New York, Reverend Elaine Flake was born on July, 2, 1948 an only child to Leroy and Lorene McCollins in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1970, she graduated with her B.A. degree in English from Fisk University and went on to get her M.A. degree in English from Boston University. In 1993, Flake earned her Masters of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York. She was also awarded a D.D. degree from United Theological Seminary in Ohio where her husband, the Reverend Floyd Flake was an alumnus.

In 1976, Flake assumed a leadership role at The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York alongside her husband. Through their work, The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral became the 57th largest church in America and was featured nationally in media like Ebony Magazine and The History Channel. In 1983, she co-founded the Allen Christian School in Jamaica, NY, serving over 500 African American students. She went on to found the Allen Women's Resource Center providing services to women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. The Center is also partnered with New York's 'Superwoman Program' to help women find untraditional career fields. That same year Reverend Flake began the Allen Prison Ministry, the Allen Cancer Support Ministry, and the Allen HIV/AIDS Spiritual Support Ministry. These resources together made the Cathedral a central point in Queens, New York. For twenty-seven years, she has also hosted annual spiritual retreats/conferences for women. In 1999, she became the co-Pastor of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York.

In the late 1990's Flake contributed to publications about spirituality including the *Women of Color Study Bible* compiled by World Bible Publishing and *Souls of My Sisters: Black Women Break their Silence, Tell Their Stories, and Heal Their Spirits* edited by Dawn Marie Daniels and Candace Sandy. In 2003, Flake and her husband co-authored their own book *Practical Virtues: Everyday Values and Devotions for African American Families Learning To Live With All Our Souls* filled with historical narratives related to spiritual values. Together they also wrote the *African American Church Management Handbook* and in 2007, Flake alone wrote *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Hurting Women*.

Flake lives in New York City with her husband Floyd and they have four adult children, Aliya, Nailah, Robert, and Harold.

Elaine Flake was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 27, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 27, 2010, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Pastor Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake (1948 -) was a pastor at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral in New York City, a co-founder of the Allen Christian School and the author of *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Hurting Women*.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Flake, Elaine McCollins

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pastor

HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake, April 27, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake, Section A2010_006_001_001, TRT: 0:29:45 2010/04/27

Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake was born on July 2, 1948 in Memphis, Tennessee to Lorene White McCollins and Leroy McCollins. Her maternal grandfather worked on the Illinois Central Railroad; and raised his children, including Flake's mother, on a farm in Water Valley, Mississippi. Flake's mother matriculated at Jackson State College, and transferred to LeMoyne College when her parents moved to Memphis. Flake's father was one of twelve children born to a farming family in Oakland, Mississippi. After finishing high school, he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He then worked at the Mallory Air Force Depot and opened a restaurant in Memphis, where he met Flake's mother. Flake grew up in Memphis as her parents' only child, and often spent time at her maternal grandmother's house. During the Civil Rights Movement, Flake and her family participated in the bus boycott led by Memphis civil rights activists like Reverend Benjamin Hooks, Jesse Turner, Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles and A. Maceo Walker.

Civil right movements--Tennessee--Memphis.

African Americans--Mississippi--Social conditions.

African Americans--Tennessee--Social life and customs.

African Americans--Mississippi--History--20th century.

African Americans--Tennessee--History--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake, Section
A2010_006_001_002, TRT: 0:28:48 2010/04/27

Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake attended Hamilton Elementary School and Hamilton High School in Memphis, Tennessee, where she was encouraged to pursue a college education. When she was in the tenth grade, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated, and many community members worried about fate of the Civil Rights Movement. Flake hoped to attend college outside of Memphis, which was strictly segregated during her childhood; and, in 1966, matriculated at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Her classmates included poet Nikki Giovanni, nonprofit executive Ramona Edelin and philosopher Lucius Outlaw. In 1968, she and her female peers were confined to the dormitories during the civil unrest that followed Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. Upon graduating in 1970, Flake enrolled in a graduate program at Boston University. She moved to Boston, Massachusetts at the start of the desegregation busing crisis, and experienced intense racial animosity in the city's all-white neighborhoods.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963--
Assassination.

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

African American music.

African American musicians.

Civil rights movements--Tennessee--Memphis--History--
-20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake, Section
A2010_006_001_003, TRT: 0:30:23 2010/04/27

Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake studied English at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts, which was her first experience at a primarily white institution. She expected the city to be integrated, but encountered severe racial discrimination in areas like South Boston. Upon graduating, Flake became an English teacher, and joined the St. Paul A.M.E. Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she met her husband, Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake. In 1975, the couple moved to New York City, where he became the pastor of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral

of New York; and Flake founded the Allen Christian School, an affiliated school for early education. In 1983, she welcomed the school's first class of over two hundred students. She also helped establish the Allen Women's Resource Center, and began to consider a career in the ministry. Flake talks about the acceptance of female pastors in the African Methodist Episcopal church, as well as the resistance encountered by pioneering ministers like Bishop Vashti McKenzie.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963--
Assassination.

African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Allen A.M.E. Church (Jamaica, New York, N.Y.)

McKenzie, Vashti M., 1947-

African American women--Religious life--History.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake, Section
A2010_006_001_004, TRT: 0:29:02 2010/04/27

Reverend Dr. Elaine Flake was moved to tears during a sermon by Reverend Nurjhan Guvan, a female preacher. Her pastor suspected that she was called to the ministry during the service, but Flake was unsure for several years. During this time, she became increasingly involved in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church, and was invited to speak to several congregations. After recognizing her calling, Flake studied at the Union Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary, and then joined her husband as a co-pastor of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. There, Flake organized ministries for youth, HIV/AIDS patients and married couples. She and her husband remained at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York for the rest of their careers, an uncommon practice in the A.M.E. church. Flake reflects upon her life and legacy, as well as her concerns for the church and the African American community. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

African American clergy.

African Methodist Episcopal Church--Education.